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By Dr. J. B. Gordon, Fayetteville, Tenn.

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Elizabeth Spurgeon,
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Alex McKee and Mrs. Susan McKee (nee Bowerman) married 12 Dec 1850 in Randolph County, Ill.



Katie's Kolyum

A woman's viewpoint
by KATIE FIENE BIRCHLER
Chester



ONE OF THE BIG HOLIDAYS of the year is coming up Monday, as you well know—Independence Day, the Fourth of July—with celebrations running all the way from a back yard barbecue to the annual observance in Steeleville, which has been taking place for so many years no one knows when it began.

THERE CERTAINLY COULD NOT BE a celebration without flags. Hundreds of them. An avenue of flags along the parade route in Steeleville is as inspirational a sight as you'll find. I don't know about you, but I am filled with emotion when I see them, and when the colors pass in review. I swallow and swallow to get rid of a lump in my throat and could spill tears if I didn't bite 'em back. What does it mean? Is it patriotism? Female frailty?

ANYWAY, WITH THE FLAG IN MIND and the fact that flags can be purchased as easily as walking into your favorite store, go back in time with me for a few minutes—back 123 years for a looksee at a flag. A very special and unusual flag, and a story. A true flag-raising story.

THE TIME: 1860. The place: Six Mile just north of Cutler. In the Mound Church area. Men of Six Mile are determined to make and fly the most impressive, the largest, most glorious flag anyone has ever seen. It will be ready by July 4th. (Descendents of these men are with us today—many of them. The Gordens, DeVinneys, Campbells, Harshaws, McClures, Blairs, Hunters, Piers, Browns, Bradens, Hoods, Hendersons, Adams, Ramseys to name a few.)

THE SPOT: FLAGPOLE CORNER where the Sparta-Pinckneyville road crosses the Perry-Randolph County line.

IMAGINE, IF YOU WILL, a flag pole 80 feet above the ground. It is in three sections, banded together at two places by rings of wagon tire, with holes through both iron and wood, through which iron bolts are run, taps put on and firmly screwed together. The hole for the pole is dug at a slant to the east, allowing the digger to go down into it as he works, as well as giving a start for the pole. No augers, of course. Just hand digging. Or shovel digging. The hole will be deep enough to cover the tallest man.

AT LAST THE 7-FT. HOLE IS FINISHED and the pole is ready. It is rolled around to slip down the slant to its resting place. A line is slipped through its tip and the crowd (a gathering of men—no women) is surging around it. They brought the pole in pieces on log wagons with pulleys and tackling. Slowly it is rising, steadied by men on each side. Out of reach by hand they hold long poles against it. Steadily; firmly, a team of horses draws on the pulleys. Some one is holding the horse's bits as they seem to sense danger. Steady there. Now. The pole is upright without a mishap. The dirt is crammed hard around it and tamped down. Tamp, tamp. It is done.

NOW THE FLAG. That beautiful flag, stitched by hand, every inch of it, is 24 feet long and eight feet wide. (While it cannot be documented, it is believed that ladies, women and girls of the Mound Church or of Six Mile, made the flag. Reasoning has it that it was made and put together there (the church) because it was the only place with sufficient room to stretch out strips of cloth 24 feet in length.

THE FLAG IS BROUGHT FORWARD at the gentle hand of Riley Gordon, who has cared for it since the last stitch was added. It is fastened tightly, securely, safely, pulled up, and the lines fastened below. A flag has never been here before. Never. Wind has never found one in this spot. It looks as though wind will not find this one. It seems to stretch like a sleepy giant. Moving slightly. Only slightly. Everyone stands breathless. Slowly, almost reverently, it begins to move. A breeze catches it and in a stirring moment waves unfurled, full and glorious. The men stand in awe. In silence. Then cheers fill the air. Hearts pound with pride and emotion. A tribute to the patriotism of pioneer people of Six Mile. On July 4, 1860 and on many other occasions thereafter the Six Mile flag was flown.

HOWEVER, TIME HAS CHANGED ALL OF THAT. The Six Mile flag remains a stirring story out of the past. There may be a portion of it in some attic—in a trunk, pressed in a Bible—somewhere. It would be interesting to know anything at all about it. If you, dear reader, have any info, let us know.

I LIKE TO THINK that while flags themselves have changed from hand stitched to machine made, and they are easily available in any size, the same feeling of love and patriotism they induce has not changed. Oh, there are occasions when we feel the flag is not respected, but Americans with a deep feeling of patriotism and love of Old Glory far outnumber the others. Hooray for that.

WE'RE GRATEFUL TO long time friend and historian REX FRANKLIN of Vergennes who was nice enough to supply information about the Six Mile Flag from writings by Dr. J. B. Gordon (1929).



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